

Protect Yourself from Heat Stress

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Heat stress can be a major concern for indoor and outdoor workers, especially during the hot summer months. Heat stress can lead to illnesses, such as heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. Additionally, injuries can happen when workers have sweaty palms or fogged-up safety glasses, touch hot equipment, or have heat-related symptoms that cause them to forget or neglect safety protocols. CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, NIOSH, wants you to know how to protect yourself from heat stress while at work.

High temperatures and humidity, direct sun exposure, exposure to radiant heat sources, like furnaces, and being at a worksite where there is limited air movement can result in a hot environment and put workers at risk for a heat-related illness. Other factors that can play a role include how difficult the work tasks are and what personal protective equipment and clothing is being worn. Workers may also have individual risk factors, such as their level of hydration, physical condition, health problems, certain medications, pregnancy, advanced age, and their body not being used to the heat.

Heat-related illnesses include heat cramps and heat exhaustion. Heat exhaustion, if untreated, may lead to heat stroke. This is the most severe kind of heat-related illness and requires immediate medical attention. With heat stroke, the body is not able to regulate its temperature, which rises to critical levels. Symptoms of heat stroke may include confusion; slurred speech; loss of consciousness; red, hot, dry skin or profuse sweating; very high body temperature; and seizures. Heat stroke can be fatal. If you think someone is suffering from heat stroke, call 911 and try to cool them as quickly as possible by putting them in an ice bath or applying cold, wet cloths to their body.

Here are some ways to reduce *your* risk of a heat-related illness.

1. Take time to get used to the heat, known as acclimatization. Gradually increase the amount of time you work in the heat until your body has adjusted. This may take 7 to 14 days.
2. Stay well-hydrated with cool water. In some situations, if you've been sweating for several hours, sports drinks may be needed to restore electrolytes.
3. Watch for signs of heat-related illness in your co-workers. Know the signs and symptoms, as well as first aid. Pair up with a buddy to check in with about how you feel.
4. Take time to rest, cool down, and take water breaks. You may need to work for shorter periods, with more rest breaks when temperatures and humidity increase, when you are wearing personal protective equipment, and for heavier work. During heat waves, all workers will need more rest breaks.

For more information about heat stress at work please go to [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) and enter *NIOSH Heat Stress* in the search box. NIOSH is spelled n-i-o-s-h.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, please visit [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.